

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02 INR-05
CIAE-00 PM-03 DODE-00 IO-03 TRSE-00 OMB-01 PRS-01
ACDA-10 SAJ-01 /054 W
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R 251230Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5012

INFO AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION USBERLIN

CINC EUR VAHINGEN

CINC USAREUR HEIDELBERG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 01408

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT GW

SUBJECT: HELMUT KOHL'S CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR

REF: MUNICH 173

SUMMARY. DURING MY INITIAL CALL ON CDU LEADER HELMUT KOHL, KOHL APPEARED RELAXED AND CONFIDENT ABOUT HIS PROSPECTS. HE SAID THAT STRAUSS WOULD SOON BE GOING TO BAVARIA, ESTIMATED THE CHANCE OF THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT LASTING FOUR YEARS AT LESS THAN 50-50, AND SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE SPD GOVERNMENT IN BERLIN. HE REITERATED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS HIS WARM FEELINGS
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TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING MY CALL ON HIM ON THE AFTERMOON OF JANUARY 24, OPPOSITION LEADER KOHL MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- STRAUSS AND BAVARIA. KOHL SAID THAT IT NOW

APPEARS CLEAR THAT SCHMIDT WILL RETURN TO BAVARIA THIS YEAR TO BECOME MINISTER-PRESIDENT (SEE REFTEL). KOHL SAID STRAUSS WANTED TO FIGHT THE 1978 BAVARIAN STATE ELECTIONS FROM A POSITION OF INCUMBENCY, AND WOULD HAVE TO BE IN OFFICE THERE FOR AT LEAST A YEAR TO GIVE HIMSELF LEGITIMACY AS AN INCUMBENT. KOHL SAID STRAUSS WOULD OBVIOUSLY STILL BE AN IMPORTANT FIGURE ON THE NATIONAL SCENE, PARTLY BECAUSE OF HIS BUNDESRAT POSITION, BUT KOHL CONVEYED THE IMPRESSION THAT HE ANTICIPATED LESS DIFFICULTY WITH STRAUSS FROM NOW ON.

-- CDU/CSU RELATIONS. KOHL SAID THAT CDU/CSU RELATIONS WERE GENERALLY GOOD EXCEPT FOR THE RECURRENT DIFFICULTIES WITH STRAUSS. HE SAID STRAUSS' KREUTH DECISION TO FORM A SEPARATE CSU PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HAD BEEN A SERIOUS MISTAKE, AND THAT STRAUSS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE A SIMILAR STEP AGAIN IN THE NEAR FUTURE EVEN IF HE WISHED. KOHL OBSERVED THAT THE IDEOLOGICAL GAP BETWEEN THE LEFT AND RIGHT WINGS OF THE CDU WAS ACTUALLY GREATER THAN THAT BETWEEN THE CDU AND THE CSU AS A WHOLE. THEREFORE, HE SAID, HE ANTICIPATED NO REAL DIFFICULTIES IN MANAGING THE JOINT PARLIAMENTARY GROUP.

-- SCHMIDT'S PROSPECTS. KOHL SAID THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT HAD DONE ITSELF INCREDIBLE DAMAGE ON THE PENSION ISSUE, BY CONTINUALLY CHANGING POSITIONS AND BY NOT TELLING PEOPLE THE FULL STORY
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FROM THE BEGINNING. HE SAID IT WAS ASTONISHING THAT SCHMIDT, DURING THE BUNDESTAG DEBATE LAST WEEK, HAD NOT REVEALED WHAT HE MUST HAVE KNOWN -- AND WHAT EVERYBODY NOW KNEW -- TO THE EFFECT THAT THE NEW PENSIONS NEXT YEAR WOULD BE PAID AT A LOWER THAN ANTICIPATED RATE. KOHL RULED OUT THE CHANCE OF A GRAND COALITION, BUT SAID THAT HE FELT THE CHANCES FOR THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT TO SURVIVE A FULL FOUR YEARS WERE NOW LESS THAN 50-50. HE DID NOT INTIMATE WHEN OR HOW HE THOUGHT A CHANGE WOULD COME, BUT HE APPEARED FULLY CONFIDENT OF SUCH A CHANGE.

-- BERLIN. IN REPLY TO MY SUGGESTION THAT WE SHOULD KEEP IN TOUCH ON BERLIN MATTERS IN ORDER TO COORDINATE POLICIES AND NOT DAMAGE THE SITUATION OF THE CITY, KOHL REPLIED POSITIVELY THAT HE WISHED TO CONSULT. HE ADDED THAT HE WAS THOROUGHLY DISGUSTED WITH THE SITUATION IN BERLIN, STATING THAT THE GOVERNMENT UNDER MAYOR SCHEUTZ WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE

WORST ADMINISTRATION THAT BERLIN HAD HAD SINCE THE WAR.
HE DESCRIBED IT AS CORRUPT AND LACKING IN NEW IDEAS.
HE SUGGESTED THAT HE HOPED THE CDU COULD COME TO POWER
IN BERLIN IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE AND THAT HE HOPED

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 01408

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THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD HELP THE CITY IN POLITICAL
AS WELL AS ECONOMIC TERMS. HE PARTICULARLY STRESSED
THE IMPORTANCE OF BRINGING YOUNG WORKERS AND FAMILIES
TO BERLIN.

-- ATTITUDE TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. KOHL BEGAN
OUR CONVERSATION, AS HE ENDED IT, WITH AN EXPRESSION OF
WARM APPRECIATION FOR THE UNITED STATES AND ALL IT HAD
DONE IN GERMANY. HE RECALLED THAT HE HAD BEEN PRO-
AMERICAN IN THE EARLY 1970'S WHEN IT WAS NOT
POPULAR, AND OBSERVED WITH BEMUSEMENT HOW
EVERY POLITICIAN WAS NOW TRYING TO CLIMB ON THE SAME
BANDWAGON. HE PARTICULARLY EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION

WITH TROOP-COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN RHEINLAND-PFALZ HE
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DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT HE FELT IT WAS A MISTAKE FOR
THE UNITED STATES TO ROTATE ITS TROOP COMMANDANTS
SO QUICKLY, OBSERVING THAT OFTEN THE TROOP COMMANDERS
BARELY GET TO ESTABLISH GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE GERMAN
COMMUNITY LEADERS BEFORE THEY ARE MOVED TO ANOTHER
ASSIGNMENT.

2. KOHL'S ATTITUDE THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION WAS
THAT OF A MAN CONFIDENT OF HIS FUTURE AND VERY RELAXED
ABOUT THE PRESENT SITUATION AND ABOUT HIS PROSPECTS.
HE STRESSED THE FACT THAT THE CDU PARLIAMENTARY GROUP
WAS NOW, ON THE AVERAGE, THE YOUNGEST IN THE BUNDESTAG.
HE ALSO SAID THAT THE NEW BREED IN THE PARTY, THOUGH
OCCASIONALLY RESENTED BY THE OLDER MEMBERS, WOULD ADD
GREAT STRENGTH TO THE PARTY OVER THE LONG HAUL. WITH
STRAUSS' DECISION TO RETURN TO BAVARIA AND
SCHMIDT'S REPEATED SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS ON THE
PENSION LEGISLATION, KOHL PLAINLY SENSES THAT THINGS
ARE MOVING HIS WAY.
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